

Amendments to the Claims

Please cancel claims 56-75 and add new claims 76-80 as follows.

1-75. (Cancelled)

76. (New) A method of operating a communication system, the method comprising:

in a signaling processor, receiving and processing a first Signaling System Seven (SS7) Initial Address Message (IAM) for a first call to select a first asynchronous connection between a first interworking unit and a second interworking unit;

for the first call, transferring a first control message from the signaling processor to the first interworking unit indicating the first asynchronous connection and transferring a second control message from the signaling processor to the second interworking unit indicating the first asynchronous connection;

in the first interworking unit, receiving first user communications for the first call in a Time Division Multiplex (TDM) format, and in response to the first control message, converting the first user communications from the TDM format to an asynchronous format and transferring the first user communications in the asynchronous format to the second interworking unit over the first asynchronous connection;

in the second interworking unit, receiving the first user communications in the asynchronous format from the first asynchronous connection, and in response to the second control message, converting the first user communications from the asynchronous format to a non-asynchronous format and transferring the first user communications in the non-asynchronous format;

in the signaling processor, receiving and processing a second SS7 IAM for a second call to select a second asynchronous connection between the first interworking unit and a matrix and to select a third asynchronous connection between the matrix and the second interworking unit, wherein the signaling processor selects the second asynchronous connection and the third asynchronous connection for the second call because the first asynchronous connection is not available for the second call;

for the second call, transferring a third control message from the signaling processor to the first interworking unit indicating the second asynchronous connection,

transferring a fourth control message from the signaling processor to the matrix indicating the second asynchronous connection and the third asynchronous connection, and transferring a fifth control message from the signaling processor to the second interworking unit indicating the third asynchronous connection;

in the first interworking unit, receiving second user communications for the second call in the TDM format, and in response to the third control message, converting the second user communications from the TDM format to the asynchronous format and transferring the second user communications in the asynchronous format to the matrix over the second asynchronous connection;

in the matrix, receiving the second user communications in the asynchronous format from the second asynchronous connection, and in response to the fourth control message, transferring the second user communications in the asynchronous format to the second interworking unit over the third asynchronous connection; and

in the second interworking unit, receiving the second user communications in the asynchronous format from the third asynchronous connection, and in response to the fifth control message, converting the second user communications from the asynchronous format to the non-asynchronous format and transferring the second user communications in the non-asynchronous format.

77. (New) The method of claim 76 wherein the first asynchronous connection is unavailable for the second call due to high traffic.

78. (New) The method of claim 76 wherein the asynchronous format comprises asynchronous transfer mode.

78. (New) The method of claim 76 wherein the matrix is non-resident to the signaling processor.

79. (New) The method of claim 76 wherein processing the second SS7 IAM in the signaling processor comprises accessing a service control point.

80. (New) The method of claim 76 wherein transferring the control messages comprises transferring the control messages over internet protocol links.